

Grammar— Basic Concepts & Common Mistakes

INTRODUCTION

Grammar is a Latin word which refers to the study of the form and arrangement of word, sentences and phrases. This is why, first of all, we'll describe what a word, sentence or phrase really means:

- (1) **WORD** – Word is the basic unit of a language, and blocks of words join together to form a sentence. A word can be divided into its 'stem' (the basic part which contains the meaning of the word) and its 'inflection' (the ending of a word which could identify whether it is singular or plural, or which tense is it in)
For example: In the words 'Cats' and 'Talked' the stem is 'cat' and 'talk'; whereas infinitives are 's' (showing that there are more than one cats) and 'ed' (indicating the past tense).

- (2) **SENTENCE** – A sentence is a group of words which communicates a complete thought. The various parts of a sentence are:
(A) **Subject:** If we were to say in layman terms, the subject of a sentence is a name, person or thing about which the sentence is speaking. To know the subject of a sentence, ask who or what before the verb used in the sentence. For example, in the sentence: 'Sheela is singing a song', if we have to determine the subject, then we must ask, 'Who is singing the song?' The answer is *Sheela* and that is our subject.

- (B) **Predicate:** In simple words, we can say that a predicate is what remains in the sentence after removing the subject, so

Sentence – Subject = Predicate

Predicate is basically everything that's been written about the subject. For example: our predicate in "Sheela is singing a song" will be: is singing a song.

As you can see, every sentence contains a subject and a predicate.

- (C) **Object:** It is a person or a thing on which the action of the verb takes place in the sentence. Thus, it is something upon which the subject acts.

We can find out the object in a sentence by asking who or what before the subject of the sentence. For example: in 'Sheela is singing a song', if we ask, 'What is Sheela singing?', we get the answer as 'a song'. Thus, the object of the sentence is 'a song'.

(3) PHRASES AND CLAUSES

PHRASES

A phrase is a small group of words that forms a meaningful unit within a *clause*. There are several *different* types, as follows:

- (A) **Noun Phrase-** A noun phrase is built around a single noun, for example:

- A vase of roses stood on the table.
- She was reading a *book about the emancipation of women*.

- (B) **Verb Phrase-** A verb phrase is the verbal part of a clause, for example:

- She had been living in London.
- I will be going to college next year.

- (C) **Adjective Phrase**

- An adjective phrase is built around an adjective, for example:
- He's led a very interesting life.
- A lot of the kids are really keen on football.

- (D) **Adverbial Phrase-** An adverbial phrase is built round an adverb by adding words before and/or after it, for example:

- The economy recovered very slowly.
- They wanted to leave the country as fast as possible.

Prepositional Phrase- In a prepositional phrase the preposition always comes at the beginning, for example:

- I longed to live near the sea.
- The dog was hiding under the kitchen table.

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Of course, we also use the word phrase to refer to a short group of words that have a particular meaning when they are used together, such as rain cats and dogs, play for time, or a square meal. This type of phrase is often referred to as an idiom.

CLAUSES

A clause is a group of words that contains a verb (and usually other components too). A clause may form part of a sentence or it may be a complete sentence in itself. For example:

- He was eating a bacon sandwich.
[clause]
- She had a long career but she is remembered mainly for one early work.
[clause] [clause]

(A) **Main clause-** Every sentence contains at least one main clause. A main clause may form part of a compound sentence or a complex sentence, but it also makes sense on its own, as in this example:

- He was eating a bacon sandwich.
[main clause]

Compound sentences are made up of two or more main clauses linked by a conjunction such as and, but, or, so, as in the following examples:

- I love sport and I'm captain of the local football team.
[main clause] [conjunction] [main clause]
- She was born in Spain but her mother is Polish.
[main clause] [conjunction] [main clause]

(B) **Subordinate clause-** A subordinate clause depends on a main clause for its meaning. Together with a main clause, a subordinate clause forms part of a complex sentence. Here are two examples of sentences containing subordinate clauses:

- After we had had lunch, we went back to work.
[subordinate clause] [main clause]
- I first saw her in Paris, where I lived in the early nineties.
[main clause] [subordinate clause]

There are two main types of subordinate clause: conditional clauses and relative clauses.

(i) Conditional clause

A conditional clause is one that usually begins with if or unless and describes something that is possible or probable:

- If it looks like rain a simple shelter can be made out of a plastic sheet
[conditional clause] [main clause]
- I'll be home tomorrow unless the plane's delayed for hours.
[main clause] [conditional clause]

(ii) Relative clause

A relative clause is one connected to a main clause by a word such as which, that, whom, whose, when, where, or who:

- I first saw her in Paris, where I lived in the early nineties.
[main clause] [relative clause]
- She wants to be with Thomas, who is best suited to take care of her.
[main clause] [relative clause]
- I was wearing the dress that I bought to wear to Jo's party.
[main clause] [relative clause]

Using Relative Clauses- Have you ever wondered about when to use that and when to use which or who in this type of sentence? In fact, for much of the time that is interchangeable with either of these words. For example:

- You're the only person who has ever listened to me.
- You're the only person that has ever listened to me.
- It's a film that should be seen by everyone.
- It's a film which should be seen by everyone

When referring to something, rather than someone, that tends to be the usual choice in everyday writing and conversation in British English. However, there is one main case when you should not use that to introduce a relative clause. This is related to the fact that there are two types of relative clause: a restrictive relative clause and a non-restrictive relative clause.

(C) **Restrictive relative clause** A restrictive relative clause (also known as a defining relative clause) gives essential information about a noun that comes before it: without this clause the sentence wouldn't make much sense. A restrictive relative clause can be introduced by that, which, whose, who, or whom. You should not place a comma in front of a restrictive relative clause:

- She held out the hand which was hurt.
- She held out the hand that was hurt.
[main clause] [restrictive relative clause]

You can also leave out *that* or *which* in some restrictive relative clauses:

- It reminded him of the house that he used to rent in Oxford.
- It reminded him of the house which he used to rent in Oxford.
- It reminded him of the house he used to rent in Oxford.
[main clause] [restrictive relative clause]

(D) **Non-restrictive relative clause**- A non-restrictive relative clause (also called a non-defining relative clause) provides extra information that could be left out without affecting the meaning or structure of the sentence. Non-restrictive relative clauses are normally introduced by *which*, *whose*, *who*, or *whom*, but never by *that*. You should place a comma in front of them:

She held out her hand, which Rob shook.
[main clause] [non-restrictive relative clause]

If a non-restrictive relative clause is in the middle of a sentence, you should put commas before and after it:

Bill, who had fallen asleep on the sofa, suddenly roused himself.
[non-restrictive relative clause]

(4) **PHRASAL VERBS**- A phrasal verb is a verb formed from two (or sometimes three) parts: a *verb* and an *adverb* or *preposition*. These adverbs and prepositions are often called *particles* when they are used in a phrasal verb. Most phrasal verbs are formed from a small number of verbs (for example, *get*, *go*, *come*, *put* and *set*) and a small number of particles (for example, *away*, *out*, *off*, *up* and *in*). Phrasal verbs sometimes have meanings that you can easily guess (for example, *sit down* or *look for*). However, in most cases their meanings are quite different from the meanings of the verb they are formed from. For example, *hold up* can mean 'to cause a delay' or 'to try to rob someone'. The original meaning of *hold* (for example, to *hold something in your hands*) no longer applies.

There are five main types of phrasal verb. These are:

- (A) Intransitive phrasal verbs (= phrasal verbs which do not need an object).
For example: You're driving too fast. You ought to slow down.
- (B) Transitive phrasal verbs (= phrasal verbs which must have an object) where the object can come in one of two positions:
 - (1) Between the verb and the particle(s).
For example: I think I'll put my jacket on.
 - or
 - (2) After the particle.
For example: I think I'll put on my jacket
- (C) Some transitive phrasal verbs are separable. The object is placed between the verb and the preposition.
For example: She **looked** the phone number **up**.
- (D) Transitive phrasal verbs with fixed object after the **verb**:
For example: Rita ran into Sheela the other day at her local residence, she had not seen her since leaving school.
- (E) Transitive with two objects, separable.
For example: Rita's parents were really pleased and **put** her result **down** to plenty of revising.

PARTS OF SPEECH

It is now time to understand grammar in more detail by looking at the different parts of speech:

(1) **NOUN**: It is a word which is used to name a place, person, an abstract idea or a thing. For example: in the sentence, 'Abhishek is a great person.'

There are two nouns being used: 'Abhishek' that names a person and 'person' which identifies a class of living beings.

There are different types of nouns, but a particular noun can belong to more than one type:

(a) **Proper nouns**: A proper noun always starts with a capital letter, and it always refers to a specific person, place or thing. For example: days of the week, historical places, name of a university or a person etc. So proper nouns are always specific and indicate or refer to a particular thing or person. (The italicized words below are proper nouns)

I do not work on *Sundays*.

Travelling to *India* was indeed a great experience. My favourite place has to be the *Taj Mahal* in *Agra*.

(b) **Common nouns**: In definition, it is completely opposite to a proper noun: it refers to a place, thing or person in general and not in a specific sense. As these nouns are not specific, therefore the initial letter will not be capitalized (unless of course, it is the first word of a sentence). Some examples:

The nearest *town* from here is 32 *miles* away.

I find it tough to understand why some *people* hate *smokers*.

(c) **Concrete nouns**: These nouns identify things which can be perceived or felt through our senses: touch, sight, taste, hearing or smell. Thus, these nouns refer to objects that can be sensed. For example:

Whenever I take my *dog* for a *walk*, he always tries to run away.

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- (d) **Abstract nouns:** These nouns can be defined as being contrary to concrete nouns because these do not refer to what can be experienced through our physical senses. These refer to abstract thoughts like truth, justice etc. For example:
- Buying sweets for the party was an *afterthought*.
 - Thinking about my *childhood* always makes me nostalgic.
- (e) **Countable nouns:** These are the nouns which can be counted. So these refer to things which can be counted by us that can be either singular or plural. For example,
- The *table* in my *room* looks terrific.
 - After leaving the job, he spent most of his *weekdays* reading *books*.
- (f) **Uncountable nouns:** As the name suggests, these are opposites to countable nouns. These nouns cannot be counted. They can be measured in some units but not counted. For example:
- *Oxygen* is essential for human life.
 - I need some *water*.
- (g) **Collective nouns:** These nouns refer to a group of entities like things, animals or people. For example:
- He was the smartest in his *class*.
 - The *flock* of sheep destroyed the garden.

- (2) **PRONOUNS:** These are those parts of speech which can be used in place of the nouns. Use of pronouns makes the sentences less repetitive or cumbersome. For example: Dheeraj went to the market to buy the chocolates which he liked the most. If we used 'Dheeraj' instead of the pronoun 'he' then our statement would have been a bit awkward and redundant. Take a look at this example:

- Soumitra wants his assets to be divided between his sons and their wives.

Here, if we didn't use any of the pronouns, then the sentence would have looked something like this:

- Soumitra wants Soumitra's assets to be divided between Soumitra's sons and Soumitra's sons' wives.

Pronouns are a great way of expressing ourselves without complicating the sentence with excessive repetition of the nouns.

There are several types of pronouns:

(a) Personal pronouns

These are used to refer to a specific thing or person. These are of two types:

(i) Subjective personal pronoun

Those personal pronouns which act as the subject of a sentence are known as subjective personal pronouns (I, you, he, she, it, they, we). For example:

I didn't expect this from you.

My birthday? Oh, it was indeed special!

(ii) Objective personal pronoun

These pronouns act as the object of an infinitive phrase (*a phrase which begins with 'to'*), a verb, a compound verb (*more than one verbs*) or a preposition. Me, you, her, him, it, us, you, them, are examples of objective personal pronouns. For example:

- After reading the book, Ram threw it away.

Here, it is acting as the direct object for the verb *threw*.

- I have been told that Mickey will meet us in the cafeteria. (Here, 'us' is acting as the direct object of the compound verb: 'will meet'.)

- Come on! Give that pen to me! (Here, 'me' is acting as the direct object for the preposition 'to')

(iii) Possessive personal pronouns

Pronouns which indicate possession, or identify ownership, or tell who owns something or someone, are known as possessive personal pronouns. Mine, your, hers, its, ours, theirs, his, etc. are possessive personal pronouns. For example:

- Is that your purse?

Here, a question is asked to know if that purse belongs to someone.

- *Ours* is the one parked outside the garage.

Here, 'ours' is acting as the subject of the sentence and is indicating that the speaker owns the car.

- That Ferrari is *mine*.

Here, the pronoun 'mine' is indicating that a particular Ferrari is owned by the one who spoke this statement.

Note: In the above example, the possessive personal pronoun mine is also acting as a subject complement. Subject complements are those words which follow the linking verb. A subject complement could be a noun, pronoun or an adjective.

(b) Demonstrative pronouns

These pronouns basically point to thing(s) or identify them. For example, 'this' points to something which is nearby, either in time or space. This, that, those, these are some of the common demonstrative pronouns (*this* and *that* refer to singular nouns or noun phrases; whereas, *these* and *those* are used to refer to plural nouns or noun phrases.) For example:

- *This* is something which I have never seen before!

Here, 'this' is the subject and it is referring to a noun which is nearby to the speaker.

- I really want to visit *that* place.

The demonstrative pronoun, 'that', points to some place which is not nearby to the speaker.

(c) Interrogative pronouns

The pronouns which are used to ask questions are called as interrogative pronouns. Who, whom, which, what are some of the interrogative pronouns. The compounds formed by adding the suffix 'ever' to these are also interrogative pronouns, viz. whoever, whomever, whichever, whatever.

Usage of interrogative pronouns: *who*, *whom* and sometimes *which* is used to refer to people. Whereas, *what* and *which* are normally used in cases of things and animals. (refer to the common errors section). For example:

- *Who* else is coming for tonight's party?

Here, the interrogative pronoun '*who*' is the subject of the sentence

- To *whom* does this belong?

Here, '*whom*' is acting as the object.

- What is there?

Here, '*what*' is the object of the verb: '*is*'.

(d) Relative pronouns

Relative pronouns are those pronouns which are used to link or join a phrase or clause, to another phrase or clause. Who, whom, that, which are used as relative pronouns. Adding the suffix 'ever' leads to other relative pronouns, i.e. whoever, whomever, whichever, etc.

Again, *who* and *whoever* are used to refer to subjects; whereas, *whom* and *whomever* are used in cases of objects.

- *Whoever* broke this vase will surely be in trouble soon.

'*Whoever*' acts as the subject here.

- You may select whatever you like.

Here, '*whatever*' is the object of the compound verb '*may select*'.

- The player *who* plays the best, wins the 'man of the match' award.

'*Who*' is acting as the subject of the verb and as the relative pronoun that also introduces the subordinate clause, '*who plays the best*'.

Note: A subordinate clause is also known as a dependent clause. They start with a subordinate conjunction or a relative pronoun, and contain a subject and a verb but still cannot act as standalone sentences: an additional thought or information is required to complete or finish the thought.

(e) Indefinite pronouns

These pronouns do not refer to something or someone specific, but still some entities that are identifiable. Following are some of the indefinite pronouns: all, another, any, anybody, anyone, anything, each, everyone, everybody, everything, few, many, nobody, none, one, several, somebody, someone, etc. For example:

- *Many* came to the party, but still it wasn't great to be a part of it.

Many acts as the subject, and we can see that it is not referring to someone specific, not even in number.

- He donated *everything* he found in his old basement.

As you can see, *everything* isn't referring to something specific and is neither pointing to something in particular.

(f) Reflexive pronouns

The subject of a clause or sentence is referred to, by using reflexive pronouns. Following are some reflexive pronouns: myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves. For example:

- Even though alcoholics know that drinking is harmful, but still they are unable to stop *themselves* from consuming alcohol.

- I was angry at *myself* for insulting an old man.

(g) Intensive pronouns

These pronouns are used to intensify their antecedents. The reflexive pronouns mentioned above can also be used as intensive pronouns. For example:

- The chief minister *himself* said that sincere efforts will be made to develop the state.

The intensive pronoun *himself* is intensifying its antecedent, i.e. the chief minister.

- They *themselves* promised to fulfil the prophesy.

The antecedent here is '*they*'.

(3) ADJECTIVES

The words which modify nouns or pronouns are known as adjectives. They identify, quantify or describe nouns or pronouns. Normally, these adjectives precede the noun or pronoun they modify. For example:

- His mansion is *wonderful* and *massive*.

Wow! That *blue* dress is *beautiful*!

There are many different types of adjectives:

(a) Possessive adjectives

These are similar to possessive pronouns (my, your, hers, its, ours, theirs, his). The only difference is that their use modifies a noun or pronoun. For example:

- I could not attend *my* class.

Here, the word '*my*' describes the noun 'class'.

Where is *your* pen?

'*Your*' describes or tells something about the noun 'pen'.

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(b) Demonstrative adjectives

Again, these are similar to demonstrative pronouns (this, that, these, those) but they work as adjectives by modifying the noun or noun phrase. For example:

- While running, I tripped over *that* cord.

In the given sentence, the demonstrative adjective '*that*' modifies the noun 'cord'.

- This painting is indeed spectacular!

'*This*' modified the noun '*painting*'.

(c) Interrogative adjective

These are identical to interrogative pronouns (which, what) but here, they work as adjectives by modifying the noun or noun phrase instead of just standing on their own. For example -

- *Which* paintings do you want? (Here *which* modified the noun *paintings* by defining or informing about the paintings referred to in the sentence)
- What luggage are you carrying? (*what* modifies the *luggage*)

(d) Indefinite adjective

Again, these are similar to indefinite pronoun except that they modify the noun, pronoun or noun phrase like in the following sentences:

- Many Indians go abroad for higher studies. (Here *many* modifies the noun *Indians*)
- I will not listen to any advice you have for me (*any* modifies *advice*)

(4) VERB

Verb is arguably considered to be the most important part of a sentence. It asserts or tells something about the subject of the sentence, and also depicts the state of being, events or actions. Verb is a critical element of the predicate of a sentence.

Given below are some of the examples of verbs:

- He is *drinking* orange juice.

Informs the action the subject of the sentence is doing.

- I *will go* there soon.

It is a compound verb which describes an action taking place in the future.

Verbs can be divided into three types –

(i) Action Verb – these verbs represent an action, which could either be physical or mental. Example:

- The car *hit* him. (physical action)
- He *was singing* all day long. (compound verb showing physical action)
- I am *imagining* something. (mental action)

(ii) Verbs of being (forms of be) – These verbs show a state of existence:

- His paintings *are* a work of art.
- He *was* in his room some time back.
- I *have been* there.

(iii) Linking verbs – these verbs link the subject with its complement.

(5) ADVERB

We have seen in the previous section, how adjectives modify nouns or pronouns. Similarly, adverbs also work as modifiers to verbs, adjectives, clauses, phrases or even another adverb. An adverb can do the following:

1. Indicate manner, time, place, cause, or degree of a noun, pronoun or an action.
2. Questions like how, when, where and how much, can also be answered by an adverb.

For example:

- Our cook *quickly* made the food, when we told her that we were very hungry.

The adverb '*quickly*' modifies the verb '*made*' and also tells how fast the food was made.

- Johnson wasn't getting picked for the team, but he was determined to *patiently* wait for his chance.

The adverb '*patiently*' modifies the verb '*wait*' and also shows the manner in which Johnson decided to wait.

- We urged him to undertake rock climbing more *carefully*, otherwise he could be paralyzed for life.

Here, the adverb '*carefully*' is in fact modifying another adverb (*more*).

- *Luckily*, I reached on time.

The adverb '*luckily*', modifies the whole sentence.

The verbs which join two clauses together are known as **conjunctive adverbs** (consequently, finally, furthermore, hence, however, incidentally, indeed, instead, likewise, meanwhile, nevertheless, next, nonetheless, otherwise, still, then, therefore, thus). But a conjunctive adverb requires a semicolon to join two independent clauses. For example:

- He could not prepare his car; *therefore*, he took a taxi.
- It took us two days; *finally*, we got the tickets for show.

(6) CONJUNCTIONS

These words are used to link words, phrases and clauses; therefore, it is essential to know their use in order to form logical and coherent sentences. For example:

- I bought apples *and* oranges.
- Do it *when* you are free.

These are just some basic examples, but now will look at conjunctions in more depth.

There are following types of conjunctions –

(a) Co-ordinating Conjunctions

These words (*and, but, or, nor, for, so, or yet*) are used to join individual words, phrases and independent clauses. For example (*all of the italicized words are co-ordinating conjunctions*):

- (a) Eggs and fishes are rich in proteins. (Two nouns are linked with ‘and’)
- (b) He was sad, for he had suffered a lot. (‘for’ is linking two independent clauses)

(b) Subordinating conjunctions

A dependent clause is introduced with a subordinating clause, and it also indicated the kind of relationship that exists between the dependent and independent clause. The most common subordinating conjunctions are:

after, although, as, because, before, how, if, once, since, than, that, though, till, until, when, where, whether, and while.

We will now give some examples of its use; the italicized words indicate the subordinating conjunction.

- i) *After* he talked with his friends, he felt better. (‘*After he talked with his friends*’ is a dependent clause)
- ii) If I call you, please pick up the phone. (‘*If I call you*’ is the dependent clause)
- iii) He realized that he needs to work harder when he saw his exam results. (‘*when he saw his exam results*’ is the dependent clause)

(c) Correlative conjunctions

These always come in pairs and are used to link equivalent sentence elements both...and, either...or, neither...nor, not only...but also, so...as, and whether...or’. The examples are given below, as the italicized words show correlative conjunctions:

- (i) Both my father and mother are doctors. (‘both’ ‘and’ conjunction pair is used to link two noun phrases which also act as the compound noun of the sentence)
- (ii) I will either go to Greece or Canada in my holidays. (‘either’ ‘or’ conjunction pair is linking two nouns here)

(7) PREPOSITIONS

Nouns, pronouns and phrases are linked to the other words of the sentence via prepositions. The object of the prepositions is the word which it introduces.

Spatial or temporal relationship the object has to the rest of the sentences is indicated by prepositions; the following examples depict that:

- (i) The laptop is *on* the table
- (ii) The laptop is *beneath* the table.
- (iii) He was leaning *against* the lamp.
- (iv) His house is *beside* the regional park.
- (v) I saw him *over* the bridge.
- (vi) He talks a lot *during* the class.

A prepositional phrase consists of a preposition, the object of preposition and any associated adjective or adverb. There are around 150 prepositions, but the most common ones are about, above, across, after, against, along, among, around, at, before, behind, below, beneath, beside, between, beyond, but, by, despite, down, during, except, for, from, in, inside, into, like, near, of, off, on, onto, out, outside, over, past, since, through, throughout, till, to, toward, under, underneath, until, up, upon, with, within, and without.

Examples showing use of prepositions:

- i) Excessive pollution is a cause of concern throughout the world. (‘throughout’ introduces the noun phrase ‘the world’; this prepositional phrase acts as the adverb because it describes the location of problem)
- ii) He always did his work with enthusiasm and dedication. (here the preposition ‘with’ introduces the nouns enthusiasm and dedication which act as the compound noun in the given sentence; the prepositional phrase here is an adverb because it describes how he did the work)
- iii) The teacher was searching for his book in the cabin. (in introduces the noun ‘in’ the cabin and the prepositional phrase acts as an adverb because it describes where the teacher was searching)

Some of the prepositions are:-

- (i) **In** is used with the names or countries and large towns; **at** is used when speaking of small towns and villages.

For example :

- I live in Delhi.
- I live at Rohini in Delhi.

- (ii) **In** and **at** are used in speaking of things at rest; **to** and **into** are used in speaking of things in motion.

For example :

- He is in bed.
- He is at the top of the class.
- He ran to school
- He jumped into the river.
- The snake crawled into its hole.

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(iii) **On** is often used in speaking of things at rest; and **upon** for the things in motion. *For example:*

- (a) He sat on a chair.
- (b) The cat sprang upon the table.

(iv) **Till** is used of time and **to** is used for place.

For example :

- He slept till eight o'clock.
- He walked to the end of the street.

(v) **With** often denotes the instrument and **by** the agent.

For example :

- He killed two birds with one shot.
- He was stabbed by a lunatic with a dagger.

(vi) **Since** is used before a noun or phrase denoting some point of time and is preceded by a verb in the perfect tense.

For example :

- I have eaten nothing since yesterday.
- He has been ill since Monday last.

(vii) **From** is also used before a noun or phrase denoting some point of time but is used with non-perfect tense.

For example :

- I commenced work from 1st January.
- He will join school from tomorrow.

(viii) **For** is used with a period of time.

For example :

- He has been ill for five days.
- He lived in Bombay for five years.

(ix) Use of **in** before a period of time means at the end of period, but use of **within** before a period of time means before the end of period.

For example :

- I shall return in an hour. (means I shall return at the end of an hour).
- I shall return within an hour. (means I shall return before the end of an hour)..

(x) **Scarcely** should be followed by when and not by but.

For example : Scarcely had he gone, when (**not** than) a policeman knocked at the door.

(xi) The phrase 'seldom or ever' is wrong 'Seldom or never' is right.

For example : Such goods are made for export, and are **seldom or never** used in this country.

(xii) Examine the following sentence

- This is as good, if not better than that. (Wrong)
- This is as good as, if not better than, that. (Right)
- This is as good as that, if not better. (Right)

(xiii) **Beside** means at the side of while **besides** means in addition to. *For example :*

- Beside the ungathered rice he lay.
- Besides being fined, he was sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

(xiv) **Above** and **Below** merely denote position While **over** and **under** also carry a sense of covering or movement.

- The bird flew above the lake. (Wrong)
- The bird flew over the lake. (Correct)

Here over is used to denote upward position and movement also.

(xv) **During** is used when reference is made to the time within which something happens. **For** is used when we are talking about how long something lasts.

- There are few incidents of irregularity **for** the emergency years. (Wrong)
- There are few incidents of irregularity **during** the emergency years. (Correct)

(xvi) Compare is followed by **to** when it shows that two things are alike. It is followed by **with** when we look at the ways in which two things are like and unlike each other. *For example :*

- Sanath Jayasuria's balling may be compared to the sales of a useful book, they score right from the beginning. (Wrong)
- Sanath Jayasuria's batting may be compared with the sales of a useful book; they score right from the beginning. (Right)
- If we compare Delhi University with the regional ones, we find the former to be much more efficient. (Wrong)
- If we compare Delhi University to the regional ones, we find the former to be much more efficient. (Right)

(8) INTERJECTIONS

Some of the more interesting parts of speech are the interjections. These are used to express emotions or feelings and are mostly the easiest to identify. The examples include, greetings like Hi, Hello, Goodbye, expressions like Great, Oh, Wow!, Bravo!, etc.

Interjections are normally used as part of active speech where the writer has to express immediate feelings.

- *Hi, my name is Gaurav.*
- *Oh dear! That would hurt.*
- *Excuse me! Please make way for the pregnant lady.*

(9) ARTICLES

An article is word used to modify a noun, which is a person, place, object or idea. Technically, an article is an adjective, which is any word that modifies a noun.

1. **A** or **an** does not refer to a particular person or thing. It leaves indefinite the person or thing spoken of.
For example : I saw a doctor. (means I saw any doctor)
2. **An** is used before a word beginning with vowel sound (please note a word beginning with vowel sound and not necessarily a vowel itself).
For example : an ass, an enemy, an inkstand, an orange, an umbrella, an hour.
3. **An** is placed before an abbreviation if the first letter of an abbreviation is F, H, L, M, N, R, S or X.
For example :
 - An MBA was required for the post.
 - An SAO is an officer of high rank
4. **A** is used before a word beginning with a consonant sound.
For example : a boy, a woman a horse, a one-rupee note, a university, a European (both university and European begin with a consonant sound of 'yu')
5. **A** and **an** are used with words 'few' and 'little' if they refer to a small number or a small amount. Words 'few' and 'little' without the articles means almost none.
For example:
 - We have little time to spare. (means almost no time)
 - We have a little time to spare. (means some time)
 - Few persons were present at the meeting. (means almost no one was present)
 - A few persons were present at the meeting. (means some were present)
6. **A** is used in the following senses :
 - (A) In its original numerical sense of one.
For example:
 - Not a word was said.
 - A word to the wise is sufficient.
 - (B) In the vague sense of a certain time.
For example : One evening a beggar came to my door.
 - (C) In the sense of any, to single out an individual as the representative of a class.
For example : A pupil should obey his teacher.
 - (D) To make a common noun of a proper noun.
For example : A Daniel came to judgement. (A Daniel = A very wise man)
7. **The** points out a particular person or thing or someone or something already referred to.
For example :
 - I saw the doctor. (means I saw some particular doctor)
 - The book you want is out of print.
8. **The** is used with names of gulfs, rivers, seas, oceans, groups of islands and mountain ranges.
For example :
The Persian Gulf, The Red Sea, The Indian Ocean, The British Isles, The Alps.
9. **The** is used before the name of certain books.
For example : The Vedas, The Puranas, The Ramayana.
But we never say 'The Valmiki's Ramayana'. **The** is not used when the name of a book is mentioned along with the author's name. So, 'Valmiki's Ramayana' is correct.
10. **The** is used before the names of things unique of their kind.
For example : the sun, the sky, the ocean, the sea.
11. **The** is used before a plural common noun if it refers to a particular group among the class and not the whole class.
For example : Drive away the cows from the field.
12. **The** is used before a proper noun only when it is qualified by an adjective.
For example : The great Rani of Jhansi, the immortal Kalidas.

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13. **The** is used before the superlatives.

For example :

- Sachin is the best batsman in the world today.
- The best person should win.

14. **The** noun if emphasis is laid on the use of such a noun. Here, noun can be proper or abstract noun

- the time for doing it.
- occasion to help the distressed.

15. **The** is used with ordinals.

For example :

- He was the first student to finish his homework.
- The second chapter of the book is very interesting.

16. **The** is used before an adjective when the noun is understood.

For example :

- The poor are always with us. (Here poor mean poor people, which is understood.)
- The weak and the strong. (Here weak means weak people and strong means strong people.)

17. No article is used before a common noun when it refers to all the members of the class.

For example :

- Man is mortal.
- Fish has high protein content.
- What kind of flower is it?

18. **The** is used before a common noun to give it the meaning of an abstract noun.

For example : The devil in him begins its misdeeds now and then.

19. No article is used before the names of materials such as gold, stone, wine, iron, wheat, wood, cloth.

For example :

- Gold is a precious metal.
- Wheat grows in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh.
- Iron is a useful metal.

Note: But it is correct to say

For example : An iron is a useful gadget.

Because here we are not taking about material iron, but the object which is used to make clothes smooth.

20. No article is used before proper nouns.

For example :

- Delhi is the capital of India.
- Newton was a great philosopher.
- This man is a second Newton.
- Bombay is the Manchester of India.

Here Newton and Manchester is not used as a proper noun but a common noun. The first sentence means that this man is as great as Newton and the second sentence means that Bombay is a great manufacturing City like Manchester.

21. No articles are used before a common noun used in its widest sense.

For example :

- The science has developed much in the past hundred years. (Incorrect)
- Science has developed much in the past hundred years. (Correct).

22. No article is used before the noun following 'Kind of':

For example :

- What kind of a hobby is this? (Incorrect)
- What kind of hobby is this? (Correct)

23. No article is used before abstract nouns.

For example :

- Wisdom is the gift of heaven.
- Honesty is the best policy.
- The wisdom of Solomon is famous.
- I cannot forget the kindness with which he treated me.

Here the article is used before the abstract noun as the abstract noun has been qualified by an adjective or adjectival clause.

24. No article is used before languages, subject of arts and science.

For example :

- We are studying English.
- Geometry is the toughest subject I have ever studied.

25. No article is used before words such as school, college, church, bed, table, hospital, market, prison.

For example :

- I went to school till last year.
- I have never been to hospital.

But an article is used before these words when reference is made to a definite place.

26. No article is used before the name of relations like father, mother, aunt, uncle.

For example : Mother would like to see you.

But If someone else's mother is being talked about then **the** should be used.

For example : The mother would like to see you.

27. Article should not be used before positions that are held at one time by one person only.

For example :

- S D Sharma was elected the president of the country. (Incorrect)
- S D Sharma was elected president of the country. (Correct)

28. Please consider this sentence

(a) I have a black and white cat.

Here I mean that I have one cat that is partly black and partly white.

Now, consider this sentence

For example : I have a black and a white cat.

Here I mean that I have two cats one is black and the other white. Hence the rule is that when two or more adjectives qualify the same noun, the article is used before the first adjective only. But when they qualify different nouns, the article is used before each adjective separately.

Consider one more *example*.

- The President and Chairman is absent.
- The President and the Chairman are present.

Sentence a means that only one person is acting as president as well as chairman. Sentence b means that two different persons are acting as the President and the Chairman and both the persons are absent.

(10) DETERMINERS

These words introduce a noun with words like a/an, the, this, every, those, many, etc. These are placed before the noun so that it is clear what the noun refers to. For example:

'People' just means a group of human beings, but '*these people*' indicates the people referred to in the phrase/clause and hence, '*these*' is used as a determiner here.

There are several classes of determiners:

(I) Definite articles

This is a definite article which comes under determiners, and is amongst the most frequently used words in English. We will list some of the cases or situations in which it is used:

(a) It is used to refer to something which is unique, or only one of such a type exists.

For example:

- *The Pope* gave a great speech yesterday.
There is only one Pope, and this is signified or indicated by the definite article '*the*' used before it.
- *The Sun* is hiding in the clouds today!
As we know, there is only one Sun, so it is appropriate to introduce, or mention it by having a definite article before it to convey this oneness.
- *The king* of India was well known for his generosity.
It indicates that there was only one king at that particular time.

(b) A definite article is also used before superlative adjectives, again indicating that *only one* of such kind exists.

For example:

- He is *the smartest* student in our class
There can only be one who would be deemed *the smartest*.
- He is the *tallest* person in our family
Again, there can be only *one* who can be considered the *tallest*.

(c) To refer to something we have already mentioned.

This is similar to the only one thing, because we are referring to something or someone unique, i.e. just the one we have already mentioned. Thereby, we are being very particular and we intend to refer to only that entity.

For example:

- **A boy was running down *the* streets and he suddenly fell as he tried to avoid *a* collision.**
- ***The* boy was lucky that he did not suffer any serious injuries.**

You could argue the necessity of this ‘*the*’, but with this determiner, it is indicated that we are not referring to just *any* boy, we refer to that one boy we just mentioned. Thus, it helps in removing this small ambiguity.

- (d) To imply one trait or just something about *all the entities* referred to by the noun.

For example:

- *The dogs* are often reliable.
- ‘*The*’ helps convey a trait which *all the dogs* have.
- *The moms* are always very emotional about their kids.
- The definite article helps say something about ‘*all the moms*’.

- (e) When we are referring to a system or service. For example:

- *The fire brigade* took just five minutes to arrive at the site.
- Did you listen to *the radio* last night?
- *The police* did a commendable job.

- (f) **When referring to a specific group of people.** For example:

- *The rich* should do more charity.
- It’s heartrending to see *the poor* suffer so much.
- She works to make lives of the *orphans* better.

- (g) Before naming a country (*the United Kingdom*), some unique place (*the Bermuda triangle*), organization (the WHO), well known buildings or works of art (*the Taj Mahal*), hotels or pubs or restaurants (*the Oberoi hotel*), or geographical features (*the Mountain*) and even families (*the Thakurs*).

(II) Indefinite articles

Let us now move on to the indefinite articles: A and An.

Definite articles are used before stating something that is very specific or unique. On the other hand, indefinite articles are used to refer to non-specific nouns. The use or significance of both these indefinite articles is the same, but ‘*a*’ is used before a noun which has a consonant sound. Whereas, ‘*an*’ is used before a noun which has a vowel sound. For example:

- Are you reading *a* novel?
- I saw *an* elephant while going to school!

The situations or cases in which these two indefinite articles are used:

- (1) Before a countable noun when the user does not exactly know what we are referring to. For example:

- *I am looking for a red pen.*
Now which pen is specifically talked about, is not known.
- *I need a cigarette.*

Which cigarette? The reader or hearer does not know that.

- (2) Use it to indicate that something is a part of the group, or is a constituent.

For example:

- *She is a student in the Bangalore University.*
She is one of the students who studies in this university.

- (3) Never use an indefinite article with an uncountable or plural noun.

For example:

- I am eating a grapes. (Incorrect)
- I am eating grapes. (Correct)
- I am drinking a water. (Incorrect)
- I am drinking water. (Correct)

- (4) Use it while conveying what someone is, or what they do.

For example:

- She is a teacher.
- My mother is a housewife.

- (5) Use indefinite articles with a singular noun to say something that represents all things of that kind.

For example:

- *A dog likes drinking milk.*
All the dogs like drinking milk.

(III) Demonstratives

These determiners show where an object or person is in with relation to the speaker. There are four demonstrative determiners: *this, that, these, those*.

This (for singular nouns) and *these* (for plural nouns) are used to refer to something or someone near to the speaker in distance or time; whereas, *that* (for singular nouns) and *those* (for plural nouns) are used to refer to something or someone which is relatively further away, or behind in time. For example:

- Whose is *this* pen?
- *These* pictures are really beautiful.
- *Those* days are still fresh in my memory.
- Give me *that* pen.

The relative positioning indicated could also be *psychological* like:

- I know nothing about that. (far away)
- This is bound to be joyful. (near)

(IV) Possessive determiners

These show who the thing belongs to. The possessive determiners are: *my, your, his, her, its, our, their*. For example:

- This is *my* pen.
- *Their* homes were burned in the protest.

(V) Quantifiers

These can be classified under adjectives and adjectival phrases, as they inform or tell something about the noun. Quantifiers answer simple questions like ‘*How much?*’, or ‘*How many?*’ Some of the most common quantifiers are: *a few, a little, much, many, a lot of, most, some, any, enough, etc.*

- I have many pens.
- Do you have some water?

(VI) Question words

While asking a question, these words indicate which thing or person is being referred to. There are three question words: *which, what, and whose*.

- What are you talking about?
- Which movie are you watching?
- Whose is this house?

(VII) Defining words

These indicate which thing or person is referred to in the sentence. The words that come under the category of defining words are: *which, and whose*.

- I do not remember which car is this.
- The chef whose recipes are marvelous has just moved out.

MODALS

The verbs like *can, could, may, might, would, shall, should* and *ought* are called modal verbs or modals. They are used with ordinary verbs to express meanings such as possibility, permission, certainly etc.

- (1) **Can** usually expresses ability or capacity
I can swim across the river
Can you lift this table?
- (2) **Can** is also used to express permission
You can go now.
- (3) **May** is a more formal modal used to express permission
You may come in.
May I leave the room now?
- (4) **May** is also used to suggest possibility in an affirmative sentence.
He may be at home
It may rain tomorrow
- (5) **Can** is used to suggest possibility in negative/interrogative sentence.
Can this be true?
It cannot be so.
- (6) **May** when used in a negative sentence suggests an improbability whereas *can* suggests impossibility.
He may not come today.
She cannot sing.
- (7) **Could** and **might** are used as past forms of *can* and ‘*may*’.
I could swim across the river when I was young.
I thought he might be at home.
- (8) **Might** suggests less possibility or probability than *may*.
I might go to Bangalore next week suggests the probability of going is less than a sentence with ‘*may*’ will suggest.
- (9) **Could** is used as a polite form of seeking permission or making a request.
Could you pass me the plate?
Could I please talk to Mr. Grover?
- (10) **Shall** is used with first person and *will* in all the persons to denote future action.
I shall need the money tomorrow.
When will you come next?

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- (11) **Shall** is used with the second and third person to express command, promise or threat.
You shall never come near my child.
You shall be punished for this.
We shall go for a picnic this Sunday.
- (12) Will You ? indicates an invitation or request.
Will you dine with us tonight ?
Will you lend me your car for a week ?
- (13) **Should** and **would** are used as past forms of shall and will.
I expected that I would get a first class.
She would sit for hours listening to the radio.
- (14) **Should** is used to express duty or obligation.
We should obey the laws.
You should keep your promise.
- (15) **Should** is used to express a supposition
If it should rain, they will not come.
- (16) **Should** can also be used to express probability.
He should be in the library.
- (17) **Must** is used to express necessity.
You must improve your spelling.
- (18) **Must** is also need to express obligation, and is a stronger word than should.
We must follow the law.
- (19) **Must** is also used to express logical certainty.
Living alone in such a big city must be difficult.
- (20) **Ought** is used to express moral obligation and is stronger than both should and must.
We ought to love our parents.
- (21) **Ought** is also used to express probability sometime when the probability is very strong.
The book ought to be very useful.

VERB TENSES

Tenses are very important to learn and understand in order to form grammatically correct sentences. Not many would know terms like 'present perfect continuous tense' but would still be able to speak or write correct English. We have already studied that verbs are 'action words', but these verbs can also depict the time of action, event or condition by changing their form. This is done by the use of verb tenses.

There are many ways of categorising tenses in order to study and analyse them. We will categorise the tenses in the simplest manner:

(Note: the examples given below are based on the simple phrase 'I go')

- (I) Present tense:
- Simple Present – *I go*
 - Present Progressive – *I am going*
 - Present Perfect – *I have gone*
 - Present Perfect Progressive – *I have been going*
- (II) Past Tense
- Simple Past – *I went*
 - Past Progressive – *I was going*
 - Past Perfect – *I had gone*
 - Past Perfect Progressive – *I had been going*
- (III) Future Tense
- Simple Future – *I will go*
 - Future Progressive – *I will be going*
 - Future Perfect – *I will have gone*
 - Future Perfect Progressive – *I will have been going*

We will now discuss these tenses in detail:

(1) Simple present tense

This tense is used to describe an action or event which is occurring at the time of speaking or writing. Hence, it is used to describe the action of the present time. We will now give a few examples of sentences in the present tense:

- (a) Describe the event taking place in the present.
- She has a resolve in her eyes.
 - They do not find comfort in peace now.
- (b) Simple Present Tense is also used while saying or writing facts, or general truths.
- There are seven days in a week.
 - A triangle has three sides.

- (c) The simple tense is also used while stating something that generally happens, or is a habitual event.
- He wakes up early every morning.
 - I never go to that restaurant because the service is really poor there.
- (d) Simple tense is also used to describe works of arts, like
- Bible is the most famous book in the history of literature.
 - Paintings of Picasso are a treat for the eyes.
- (e) Simple Present tense can even be used while referring to a future event, if it is used with an adverb or adverbial phrase.
- The exam will start in 15 minutes.
 - That movie will be shown on Tuesday.

(2) Present Progressive tense

Sometimes, present progressive and simple present are used interchangeably, but present progressive is used to emphasize that the event or condition is continuing, or we can say that it used to describe a continuous present event.

- Sentences revealing the on-going state of actions:
 - (i) She is cleaning her room right now.
 - (ii) I think Sky Sports is broadcasting this match in England.
- Like simple present, present progressive when used with an adverb or adverbial phrase can be used to refer to a future event.
 - (i) People are going to queue up in 15 minutes.
 - (ii) My course is finishing next week.

(3) Present Perfect Tense

This tense is used to describe an event or action which began in the past and still exists or still continues in the present, or has just finished in the present. Present perfect tense can also be used to describe an event or action that took place in the past, but which still has an effect on the present.

- He has not given us the money yet.
The above statement says that the money was not given in the past and the money has still not been given at the time of speaking either.
- Ron has decided to wake up early in the morning every day.
The above statement says that Ron decided something in the past, but that decision taken in the past is still influencing or affecting the present.
- The government has decided to increase the price of diesel; consequently, the cost of transportation has also increased.
Both the events talked about in the above sentence refer to something which took place in the past, but still has an effect on the present.

(4) Present Perfect Progressive

It is similar to present perfect tense in the sense that it is used to refer to an event which begun in the past and continues to exist or be there in the present. The only difference between both these tenses is that, present perfect progressive tense is used to emphasize the fact that the event still continues in the present.

The following sentences are examples of present perfect progressive tense:

- I have been hoping to get results.
- We have been shopping all day.

(5) Simple Past Tense

This tense is used to express an event or action that took place in the past, or sometime before the moment of speaking or writing. Each of the following sentences refers to an event which happened at some point in the past.

- Sam called me yesterday.
- He parked his car in a no-parking zone.

(6) Past Progressive Tense

This tense is used to describe an event or action which was ongoing in the past. Often, these actions take place within a specific time in the past. We have seen that the present progressive tense is used to describe an event which took place in the past and still has an effect or influence in the present; but, in case of the past progressive tense, the event of the past has no evident or obvious effect in the present. Actions described in the past progressive tense began and finished at different times in the past. Hence, the events of past which lasted for some time are expressed with the past progressive tense.

The following examples show how the past progressive tense is used:

- Yesterday, I saw her walking on the streets.

The above sentence describes an event that took place for a continuous period of time in the past. Barring anything out of ordinary, the woman's walk on the streets yesterday has no obvious or evident effect on the present.

- Rohit was telling us stories of the times he spent working for the Indian army.

The above statement says that Rohit was telling stories in the past, and he stopped telling them in the past too, i.e. he is not telling those stories in the present. But that event, which is story-telling, took place for a continuous period of time in the past.

(7) Past Perfect Tense

The past perfect tense is used to express an event which was completed in the past; sounds similar to the simple past tense? The difference between these tenses is that the past perfect tense is used to emphasize that the event or action ended before some

another event or action begun. (*all in the past*). So, basically the two events are mentioned in such a way that one of them ended before the other one started.

The following examples show how the past perfect tense is used:

- Mithun had finished eating the lunch before Josh came.

The above sentence describes two events: 'eating' and 'came', but the information which is inferred from this sentence is: the event of 'eating' ended before another event 'came' took place.

- The drought had lasted for 2 months.

We discussed a similar statement in the present perfect tense – 'the drought has lasted for 2 months' this statement indicated that the drought was declared 2 months ago, and it still exists, i.e. the drought is there even now. So, this event took place in the past and it is there in the present too. But, in the past perfect tense – '*The drought had lasted for 2 months*' says that the drought started and also finished at their respective points in the past, and this has no evident connection to any present event.

- After Hitesh had started earning, he felt more independent.

Both the events or conditions took place at the same point in the past. The speaker could have also said, 'After Hitesh started earning, he felt more independent' (simple past). This statement expressed in the past perfect tense emphasizes that he felt more independent *after* he had started earning. So, we can see that the difference of just one word alters the meaning or the information conveyed.

(8) Past perfect Progressive Tense

This tense is also used to refer to two events of the past. The tense shows that a continuous or progressive event began before another event had begun, or it interrupted the first event. So, it is essentially used to stress that a continuous event took place before some other event started.

Examples of sentences in the past perfect progressive tense are shown below:

- I had been watching the movie before he came.

The above sentence says that the continuous event '*watching*' was interrupted or stopped by some other event: 'he came'.

- I had been looking for my pen drive for 2 hours before I found it.

The above sentence says that the event of the past: 'had been searching' took place for a period of time in the past, i.e. 2 hours. This continuous event was followed by another event: 'found'.

(9) Simple Future Tense

This tense is used to express future events, i.e., the events which will take place after the act of writing or expressing.

The following examples show the use of the simple future tense:

- They will come tomorrow.
- Will you go out tonight?

(10) Future Progressive Tense

This tense is used to describe continuous events which will take place in the future. Therefore, ongoing future events are expressed via this tense.

The following examples will reveal how the future progressive tense is used:

- Nehal will be singing songs in my party tomorrow.

The above sentence states that a continuous event 'singing' will take place in the future.

- They will be performing the classical dance in tomorrow's show.

The event which will exist for a continuous period of time is 'performing classical dance', and this event will happen sometime in the future, i.e. 'tomorrow'.

(11) Future Perfect Tense

This tense is used to refer to an event or action that will be completed at some point in the future before another future event starts. So, two events of the future are expressed in such a way that it is conveyed that one will take place after the other.

The following examples will show how this tense is used:

- We will have completed shifting all the furniture before we move into our new house.

The above sentence says that the event of shifting the furniture precedes the event of moving into the new house.

- He will have bought all the gifts before the Christmas Eve.

Two future events are mentioned in the above sentences in such a way that it is evident that the presents will all be bought before the arrival of the Christmas eve.

(12) Future Perfect Progressive Tense

This is probably the least used tense, but it still has its own different uses. This tense is used to express an event that will take place for a continuous period of time in the future, and this event will be completed at some specified time in the future.

The following are some of the examples of sentences in future perfect progressive tense:-

- I will have been working for six years by the time I become thirty years old.

The continuous event in the above sentence is 'being in the job'; the above sentence informs that the six years being in the job will be completed when the speaker becomes thirty years old.

- When he comes back, I will have been watching the movies for four hours.

In this sentence too, the ongoing action of 'watching the movies' will precede the act of coming back.

	PRESENT	PAST	FUTURE
	Go/Goes	Went	Will Go
Simple	(i) Normal/Daily activity (ii) Historical present (iii) Expressing works of art (iv) Future events (in conjunction with adverb/adverbial phrase)	(i) Past event	(i) An event that will take place sometime in future
	Am/Is/Are going	Was/Were going	Will be going
Progress	(i) An ongoing present event (ii) Referring to a future event (in conjunction with adverb/adverbial phrase)	(i) continuous event of the past	(i) continuous event of the future
	Have gone	Had gone	Will have gone
Perfect	(i) An event that started in the past and still continues in the present	(i) An event that stated in the past and finished in a specified time in past	(i) An event that will be completed in the future before another event starts
	(ii) Used to show that a past event has an effect on the present	(ii) An event that finished in the past before some another event began	
	Have been going	Had been going	Will have been going
Perfect Progressive	(i) An ongoing event that started in the past (used to stress the ongoing nature of the event)	(i) A continuous action of the past before another event of the past began	(i) continuous action of future will be completed before some other time in the future

PUNCTUATIONS

Punctuations are necessary for the production of effective and clear writing. Some of the questions on the different tests are based solely on your knowledge and use of punctuations. We will take up all the different punctuation marks which we can say are most important to our study:

(1) Comma

It is probably the most frequently used punctuation mark. It is used to separate different parts of sentences, and to tell the readers to pause between words, or group of words or clauses and also helps in clarifying the meaning of a sentence. Use of comma is optional, i.e. it depends on the writer how much he/she wants to use it. Some writers use it a lot, while others use them sparingly. Thus, it depends on the individual, and maybe you will find that not using them frequently leads to a more effective writing; it is all very subjective.

Every comma represents a slight pause, hence a small break in the sentence. The pauses are necessary and hence the use of comma is optional only if the meaning of the sentence will not change if the comma is not used.

We will now try to describe all the different uses of comma:

(a) Commas are used to separate phrases, clauses or groups of three or more words. You can use these before the coordinating conjunctions which join the independent clauses.

- Exams will take place on the Sunday, so be prepared.
- I went there to buy some chocolates, but I didn't find any.

Let us also take an example of how comma is optional – In the example below, we will not use the comma but you can choose to use it before the conjunction 'and':

- He asked for more money and he got it.

(b) Use comma before an introductory phrase or word.

- Used after an adverbial introductory phrase:
After searching all day long, he finally found his purse.

- Used after an introductory adverb:
Fortunately, I reached there on time.

- Introductory prepositional phrase:
In the bottom drawer, you will find a pen.

(c) Using a comma to separate items in a list, or separate the entities –

- I need to go to the supermarket to buy some vegetables, oil, eggs and flour.
- The countries I would like to visit: Croatia, Italy, Spain and Brazil.

(d) Some writers use comma after nonessential phrases; this usage is optional.

- That place, I reckon, is really haunted.
- Well yes, I hate it.

(e) Use a comma to set off an appositive (a word or a phrase which renames a noun)

- Mike, Ron's father, was a brilliant mathematician.

End of sentence punctuation marks:

These punctuation marks let the reader know that the sentence is over. The punctuation marks which indicate the end of a sentence are:

(2) **Period**

It is the most frequently used end punctuation marks; it is just used to terminate a sentence.

- Go to the kitchen, and bring me something to eat.
- It is quite windy today.

(3) **Exclamation mark.**

This punctuation mark is used after an exclamatory sentence. Use it in a sentence which represents a sense of urgency, excitement and some strong emotions. Exclamation marks are rarely, if at all, used in formal writing.

- This fish is really beautiful!
- Go there now!

The exclamation mark should not be used to unnecessary exaggerate sentences, like:–

He is the best player ever!

The word best has already emphasized and stressed how good a player he was, so there is no need of an exclamation mark in the end.

(4) **Question mark**

This punctuation mark is used after a sentence which refers to a direct question:–

- Where are you going?
- What is his name?

As already stated, the question marks should be used only after a direct question. We will give some examples of indirect questions. See that no question mark is required in such sentences:–

- I am not sure who broke this window.

It is not a direct question to anyone.

- He then asked some tough questions.

Again, no question is asked to the listener (s).

(5) **Semi-colons**

These are used to join two independent clauses which are not joined by coordinating conjunctions; you may consider a semi-colon as a replacement for coordinating conjunctions. Note that the independent clauses joined by a semi-colon must always be related to each other. For example, the semi-colon is wrongly used in the sentence given below.

- The weather is nice; food is delicious.

There is no relation or obvious connection between the independent clauses of this sentence, so the semi-colon should not be used here.

You should also not use semi-colon in case of a dependent clause, like –

- After having a good dinner; we went for a walk.

A comma should be used in place of this semi-colon.

We will now give a couple of examples showing an appropriate use of the semi-colon:–

- I like all the subjects we are taught in school; however, science is my favourite subject.

The word 'however' in this sentence is known as a conjunctive adverb or just a transition word as it connects two clauses of a compound sentence.

- Eating good food keeps one healthy; exercising is also important.

Semi-colons can be used to avoid confusion in case a string of commas already exists, like –

I have been to quite a few famous places: London, England; Paris, France; Rome, Italy; and Athens, Greece.

A semi-colon should not be used where a coordinating conjunction exists, like:–

I would love to buy this car; but, I do not have enough money for it.

A comma should be used instead of this semi-colon.

In some particular cases, you can use a semi-colon when a coordinating conjunction already exists: if independent clauses are very long, and quite a few number of commas have been used already.

(6) **Colons**

A lot of people confuse the colon with the semi-colon, and vice versa, but the use of these punctuation marks is very different. Basically, a colon is used to call the attention of the readers to what is to follow. We will now describe the uses of a colon and when it should be used:–

(a) Use a colon to introduce a list –

- The cities I have visited: London, Istanbul, Athens and Rome.

(b) Colons can also be used after an independent clause, but only if the clause that follows this colon explains or reasons the previous clause, or just somehow completes it. For example:

- My presentation went really well: everyone said that I presented my ideas nicely.
- All his hard work resulted in nothing: he failed to acquire the passing marks.
- I learned a great lesson today: never give up.

Now, let us see how a colon should not be used:–

(a) Do not use a colon between a preposition and its object.

I went to: London, Rome, Athens and Paris. (Incorrect)

I went to London, Rome, Athens and Paris. (Correct)

(b) A colon should also not be used between a verb and its object.

My favourite food cuisines are: Indian, Chinese and Mexican. (Incorrect)

My favourite food cuisines are Indian, Chinese and Mexican. (Correct)

(c) A colon should not be used after explanatory or introductory words.

It is common knowledge that the bureaucrats in the department, such as: Mr. Prasad, Mr. Das and Mr. Choudhary are corrupt. (Incorrect)

It is common knowledge that the bureaucrats in the department, such as Mr. Prasad, Mr. Das and Mr. Choudhary are corrupt. (Correct)

(7) Hyphens

Prefixes, suffixes and letters are joined to words by hyphens. They are also used to join word units or form compound words. We will now see some of the examples of how they are used:

- One-thirds of the people say they do not smoke.
- Fifty-five people have applied for this job.

(8) Parenthesis

The elements which are inside the parentheses are related to the sentence, but cannot be deemed essential. Let us see how these are used –

(a) They add or show information that is not essential to the sentence; they are also used to de-emphasize what is mentioned before them. For example –

- We saw quite a few European countries (Italy, England, Spain) last summer.

(b) These can also be used to enclose numbers, i.e. a list in the sentence:

- I want to see (1) Delhi, (2) Bombay and (3) Srinagar

(c) A sentence can also be enclosed in parenthesis which would help explain or clarify the information conveyed in the statement. Note that when a sentence is enclosed in brackets, no period is needed, but exclamation and question marks can be used, if necessary, like

- The clothes (I bought them two weeks back) were all there in the suitcase.

(d) An independent sentence can also be enclosed in parenthesis. In that case, the end punctuation will be inside the parentheses:

- Chetan said that the movie was great (I had seen that movie too.) He said it is one of the best movies he has ever seen.

(9) Apostrophe

The possessive case of a noun is shown by an apostrophe, it can also be used to show the letters you have left out in contraction. Let us see some of the examples:

- Ron's car is one of a kind.

The use of 'Ron's' shows the possessive case.

- Reviews of this movie are good, but I haven't seen it yet.

The use of 'haven't' is a contraction of have not.

The possessive case of a noun is shown by putting an apostrophe just after the s.

- I am very concerned about my friends' future.

Possessive pronouns do not need an apostrophe, like hers, theirs, and yours. The same applies to the possessive pronoun its (it's on the other hand is just a contraction of it is)

- Its colours are magnificent.
- I brought my id card, but she forgot to bring hers.

COMMON MISTAKES

(1) Overlooking the Subject and Verb

It is a very basic rule in grammar, but sometimes students just seem to skip it: a sentence must have a verb and a subject; otherwise, it cannot be called a proper sentence. So, while looking for the correctness of a sentence, check out the verb and subject of that sentence. Knowing them, also helps in checking errors like subject-verb agreement, sentence fragmentation etc. Students sometimes directly go hunting for some of the complicated errors that might be in a sentence, but it is always advisable to check the subject and verb of the sentence first.

(2) Ignoring redundancy

An appropriate sentence is one which is concise and clear. A sentence which is wordy, or stretched, although could be grammatically correct, but it cannot be preferred over a sentence which conveys the same message but is much more concise. Such errors are redundancy errors, which incidentally, the students easily miss out on. To understand what we are talking about here, let's take an example:

- The inflation rose by a 10 percent increase.
- The inflation rose by 10 percent.

As you can see, 'b' is much more precise and concise; whereas, 'a' has a redundancy error.

(3) Relying on what you hear

Adjudging a sentence correct just because 'it sounds right' is risky. It might be that you have read/heard something like that before. But it is possible that either what you heard was lexically wrong, or was grammatically incorrect. Always base your judgment of a sentence on grammar rules.

(4) Finding answers by looking at options.

If you are relying on options to help you find the answer, then you are making it tougher for yourself. Following this approach could also mean that you have not really understood what is wrong with the given statement. It is better to spend time on understanding the possible error rather than eliminate options. Eliminating options could also lead you to comparing the options, which would again waste your time.

(5) Logic of the sentence

A statement has to logically make sense. This is of prime importance too. Make sure that a statement you think is right, makes logical sense too. Understanding the sentence that follows or precedes the given underlined part, can really help.

(6) While replacing the underlined part with an option, ensure that you have not ended up adding some information which cannot be derived from the given sentences. Our job is to form a grammatically correct statement, and not infer information.**SOME MORE GRAMMAR MISTAKES****(1) 'Into' OR 'in to'**

'Into' is a preposition or a linking verb which means "*expressing movement or action with the result that someone or something becomes enclosed or surrounded by something else*" (source: Oxford dictionary). For example:

Deepam got *into* her car.

She put the books *into* her bag.

There are cases where the word 'in' and 'to' just happen to come together. For example:

He walked in to see if his friend was there.

(2) Its OR it's

'Its' is a possessive noun, indicating that something belongs to someone, for example: I took away *its* tires. 'It's' is the short of 'it is'. For example: Find out the keys, *it's* surely in the house.

(3) Who OR whom

Both of these are pronouns, but 'who' is used when it is the subject of a verb, for example: "Who is he?" "Do you know who stole the book?" 'Whom' is used when it works as the object of the verb, for example: "Whom did you see in the corridor?" "From whom did you buy that?"

(4) Me / myself / I

Deciding between 'me' and 'I' is similar to the choice between 'who' and 'whom'. 'Me' works as the object, and 'I' serves as the subject of the sentence.

For example:

I did it.

He did it for *me*.

(5) Lie OR Lay

The word 'lay' is often incorrectly used. While using 'lay', there must be an object, i.e., someone would 'lay' something somewhere. This is why, when mentioning rest, you *lie* down (not *lay* down).

(6) Irregular verbs

These are verbs with which we do not use the normal conjugations to create the different forms. For example, we use -ed with 'play' to create 'played'. But the same past simple verb form for 'know' will be 'known'. There are a number of irregular verbs and you must know them all to not make a mistake. For example, the word 'broadcasted' doesn't exist, it is just 'broadcast', so you have no option but to say something like, "that show was broadcast late night"; 'impactful' is not a word, 'impact' is a noun which refers to one body striking another or just some strong influence.

Some of the common irregular verbs are mentioned in the table below:

V1 Base Form	V2 Past Simple	V3 Past Participle
Awake	Awoke	Awoken
Be	Was, were	Been
Beat	Beat	Beaten
Become	Became	Become
Begin	Began	Begun
Bend	Bent	Bent
Bet	Bet	Bet
Bid	Bid	Bid
Bite	Bit	Bitten
Blow	Blew	Blown
Break	Broke	Broken
Bring	Brought	Brought
Broadcast	Broadcast	Broadcast
Build	Built	Built
Burn	Burned/burnt	Burned/burnt
Buy	Bought	Bought
Catch	Caught	Caught
Choose	Chose	Chosen
Come	Came	Come
Cost	Cost	Cost
Cut	Cut	Cut
Dig	Dug	Dug
Do	Did	Done
Draw	Drew	Drawn
Dream	Dreamed/dreamt	Dreamed/dreamt
Drive	Drove	Driven
Drink	Drank	Drunk
Eat	Ate	Eaten
Fall	Fell	Fallen
Feel	Felt	Felt
Fight	Fought	Fought
Find	Found	Found
Fly	Flew	Flown
Forget	Forgot	Forgotten
Forgive	Forgave	Forgiven
Freeze	Froze	Frozen
Get	Got	Got (sometimes gotten)
Give	Gave	Given
Go	Went	Gone
Grow	Grew	Grown
Hang	Hung	Hung
Have	Had	Had

V1 Base Form	V2 Past Simple	V3 Past Participle
Hear	Heard	Heard
Hide	Hid	Hidden
Hit	Hit	Hit
Hold	Held	Held
Hurt	Hurt	Hurt
Keep	Kept	Kept
Know	Knew	Known
Lay	Laid	Laid
Lead	Led	Led
Learn	Learned/learnt	Learned/learnt
Leave	Left	Left
Lend	Lent	Lent
Let	Let	Let
Lie	Lay	Lain
Lose	Lost	Lost
Make	Made	Made
Mean	Meant	Meant
Meet	Met	Met
Pay	Paid	Paid
Put	Put	Put
Read	Read	Read
Ride	Rode	Ridden
Ring	Rang	Rung
Rise	Rose	Risen
Run	Ran	Run
Say	Said	Said
See	Saw	Seen
Sell	Sold	Sold
Send	Sent	Sent
Show	Showed	Showed/shown
Shut	Shut	Shut
Sing	Sang	Sung
Sit	Sat	Sat
Sleep	Slept	Slept
Speak	Spoke	Spoken
Spend	Spent	Spent
Stand	Stood	Stood
Swim	Swam	Swum
Take	Took	Taken
Teach	Taught	Taught
Tear	Tore	Torn
Tell	Told	Told
Think	Thought	Thought

V1 Base Form	V2 Past Simple	V3 Past Participle
Throw	Threw	Thrown
Understand	Understood	Understood
Wake	Woke	Woken
Wear	Wore	Worn
Win	Won	Won
Write	Wrote	Written

(7) Affect OR Effect

These are often mistakenly used in the same way, but they actually differ. 'Affect' is used as a verb, for example:

Your laziness is affecting your performance.

Money affects your standard of living.

The word 'effect' is used more like a noun, for example:

There was no effect of scolding on the delinquent.

Please remove your personal effects from the office.

(8) Bring OR Take

Its correct usage depends on whether the object is moving towards or away from the subject being talked about in the sentence.

If it is moving away, then use 'take' whereas, use 'bring' in case of motion towards the subject. For example:

Tell your maid to take the clothes to the cleaners.

Bring some chocolates from the market.

(9) Since OR Because

Both these words are normally used interchangeably, but there's a subtle difference in what they refer to. 'Since' normally refers to time, whereas 'because' refers to cause. In those cases, where 'since' is used to mean causation, it can be differed from because by the fact that 'because' puts relatively more emphasis on the cause. For example:

I haven't had food since the morning.

I am feeling hungry because I haven't eaten anything.

(10) Neither ... Nor OR Either ... Or

Neither is always used with 'nor', whereas either with 'or'. For example:

Neither Carl nor Jackson is fond of music.

I'll either listen to some songs or go out.

AND YET MORE... AVOIDABLE MISTAKES

(1) Sentence is a set of words that is complete in itself, so a sentence must stand alone and be meaningful. We often carelessly use full stops and forget their importance. A full stop (or *period*) should signal a complete and stand-alone sentence which is also meaningful. For example:

Mitesh is a very rich businessman, but he has never done charity works. Although, he's a very good and king-hearted person. (Wrong)

Mitesh is a very rich businessman, but he has never done charity works, although, he's a very good and king-hearted person. (Right)

(2) **Redundant sentences:** A redundant sentence is not grammatically incorrect, but precise and concise sentences are always preferred. Therefore, we should make sure that the sentences are not 'tiresome':

The meeting was scheduled for Friday, but very few were able to attend it, so it was then rescheduled and the new meeting would be held the following Monday. (Wrong)

The meeting which was scheduled for Friday, was eventually rescheduled for the following Tuesday so everyone could attend it. (Right)

(3) **Omitted Commas:** Sentences in which commas aren't used properly can fail to make sense.

For example:

When it comes to dancing, people differ in their choices. (Wrong)

When it comes to dancing, people differ in their choices. (Right)

(4) **Subject-Verb Agreement:** This is amongst the most commonly committed mistakes in Grammar. The basic rule is: the subject and verb must agree in number, i.e., singular subjects should have singular verbs, whereas plural subjects should come with plural verbs. For example:

'He talk.'

This sentence is grammatically wrong. Here, 'he' is a singular subject, so it should have a singular verb, i.e. 'talks'.

To find this error in a sentence, first find the subject and verb in it, and then see if they agree in 'number', by saying the subject and verb together.

Finding Verb: Verbs are 'doing words' which represent the action done by the subject. Finding verbs is not as easy as it sounds. There can be cases or situations when a word which looks like a verb would actually be serving as a noun:

- Hippies sing in their own unique style.
- Hippies love to sing.

Now, let's look at both the sentences. In the first one, 'Hippies' are the subject and 'sing' is the verb. Verb is indicating what the subject *does*, or an action. The second sentence has the same subject or noun, but now 'sing' is not a verb, in fact, it is part of the noun phrase because singing is *something* which they love.

Verbs form a crucial part of a sentence. They convey the essential meaning of the clause or a noun phrase. The first statement basically tells that something *sings*, and the second one says that something loves something, so the verb in this sentence is 'love'. One more important thing to note in the second sentence is that a verb may need an object too (an object is what receives the verb). 'Singing' is what is being loved, thus, the object is 'sing'.

The following are some rules that can help you in checking whether the subject and verb agree in number:

- I. Phrases like 'Ricky and Mike' are plural, whereas the following would be singular:
 - Ricky, in addition to Mike
 - Ricky, as well as Mike
 - Ricky, along with Mike
 - Ricky, together with Mike
- II. *The following pronouns are singular:* each, anyone, anything, someone, something, somebody, everything, no one, another, everything, etc.
- III. *The following conjunctions are singular too:* neither, either.

Some tricky singulars and plurals:
 Plural: phenomena; singular: phenomenon
 Plural: data; singular: datum
 Plural: criteria; singular: criterion
 Plural: bacteria; singular: bacterium

- (5) **Parallelism:** "The same grammatical form should be maintained while comparing or listing things in a sentence."

Before we explain what is actually meant by this, let's understand what is meant by *infinitives* and *gerunds*.

Infinitives – These are verb-like phrases which begin with the preposition 'to'. They can also act as nouns in a sentence. For example:

I like to sing.

I like to travel.

In the above example, you can easily see that 'to sing' and 'to travel' are acting as nouns.

Gerunds – These are words formed by adding '-ing' to the verb. They can also act as nouns.

For example:

- I like singing.
- I like travelling.

Gerunds in the above sentence are acting as nouns because 'singing' and 'travelling' are something which the subject likes.

Gerunds and Infinitives are used interchangeably, but it is not always preferred. Infinitives are more specific than are gerunds. Therefore, to provide a more clear or specific information or idea, infinitives are preferred.

For example:

- Rocky loved singing.
- Rocky loved to sing.

Now, which one would you prefer, or say, which one gives a better information about Rocky?

The first sentence uses the gerund form and talks about 'singing'. Now, it is not clear if Rocky loves to hear people singing songs, or if he himself likes to sing. This distinction is cleared by using the infinitive form as in the second sentence.

So, let's come back to the grammar rule that we previously talked about. While we are comparing things or events in a sentence, we should either use infinitives or gerunds. Using both of them in a sentence is deemed grammatically incorrect.

For example:

- I like singing more than I love to dance. (Wrong)

In the above statement, a person is comparing entities he likes, but he used both, a gerund (singing) and the infinitive (to dance) form. The corrected and preferred form would be:

I like to sing more than I like to dance.

Parallel construction of sentences:

If you are getting confused by what is being said here, i.e., in what terms the sentence should have used the same grammatical form, the example below should help:

(Both X and Y, should be of the same grammatical form)

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| (a) x is like y e.g. singing is like dancing, etc. | (b) x more than y | (c) Prefer x to y |
| (d) Neither x nor y | (e) Either x or y | (f) Both x and y |
| (g) The more x, the less y | (h) The better x, the better y | (i) Not only x, but also y |
| (j) Not x, but y | (k) Less y than y | (l) More x than y |

- (6) **Comparison Problems:** This error is committed a lot of times: two non-comparable things are compared in a sentence.

For example:

- His chances of playing well tomorrow are less than lottery. (Wrong)

In the above statement, 'chances of playing well' are compared to 'lottery'.

- His chances of playing well tomorrow are less than his chances of winning the lottery. (Right)

In the above statement, a logical comparison is made by contrasting the chances of the two events. Comparison is not made between chances of an event, and the event itself, like in the grammatically incorrect statement mentioned above.

So make sure you do not commit such silly mistakes.

Apart from this, the things or items compared in a sentence should always be same in number, i.e., either singular or plural.

For example:

- Both of them were sore loser. (Wrong)
- Both of them were sore losers. (Right)

Usage of comparing words:

(a) Words like fewer, many or number are used only when countable things are talked about.

For example:

- He has many interesting books in shelf.
- He has a number of hobbies.
- Fewer people came to this week's concert.

(b) Words like less, much or amount are used only when uncountable things are talked about.

For example:

- There is less traffic on the outskirts of a town.
- There is much to worry about the country's economic state.
- Huge amount of water was there on the field.

(c) Words like between, more or any adjective with (-er) like stronger is used while comparing exactly two things.

For example:

- Carl is stronger than Mohan.
- Carl is more powerful than Mohan.

(d) Words like among, most and adjectives with (-est) are used while comparison is made between more than two things.

For example:

- Carl is the strongest in his class.
- Carl is the most powerful guy in this class.
- Carl is the best among his classmates.

(7) Pronoun-Antecedent disagreement

Pronouns are those words which replace a noun or noun phrase, and their usage removes the redundancy in statement. Pronouns can be definite like it, she, he, you and I (referring to a specified thing, place, idea or person), or indefinite, like anyone, those, neither (not referring to a specific thing, place, idea or person).

The literal meaning of 'antecedent' is something or someone from which something descends. (for example, you are your grandparents' descendants)

Now, let's understand what is meant by pronoun-antecedent disagreement:

Each and every definite pronoun takes the place of or replaces a noun in the sentence, which is called as 'antecedent'. The grammatical rule is that both the antecedent and this pronoun must agree in number and kind (personal or impersonal).

For example:

- Chinu was the one that stood out in that crowd.

In the above sentence, the pronoun (that) doesn't agree with its antecedent (Chinu) in the kind as of course. Carl is a person but, 'that' is an impersonal pronoun. The correct form would be:

- Chinu was the one who stood out in that crowd.

Some other rules related to antecedent and pronoun usage are mentioned below:

(a) **Antecedent of a pronoun should be clear and not ambiguous.** For example:

- Mita went shopping with Renu and she bought a football kit. (Wrong)

In the above statement, does the pronoun refer to Mita or Renu? It is not clear. Hence, the above statement is grammatically wrong.

- Mita bought a football kit when she went to shopping with Renu. (Right)

(b) **Correct usage of interrogative pronouns**

We have listed the correct usage of pronouns below:

- *Who* - referring to a person
- *What* - referring to a thing
- *Where* - referring to a place
- *When* - referring to a time
- *Why* - referring to a reason
- *How* - referring to an explanation

(c) **Pronoun Consistency**

You should use the same pronoun while referring to a same thing, place, person or idea. For example:

- 'One' should be careful about 'themselves' while visiting places which are under some regional conflicts. (Wrong)

In the above statement, two different pronouns are used to refer to the same noun.

- 'One' should be careful about 'oneself' while visiting places which are under some regional conflicts. (Right)

(d) **Adjectives:** These words modify the nouns and pronouns by describing something about them.

(8) Coordinating sentences.

Sentences can be of two types: Compound or complex.

(a) **Compound sentences** are those which contain more than one clauses, or complete ideas. Here, the individual clauses can also stand alone as sentences. Hence, there are no dependent clauses. For example:

- Weather was awful yesterday with heavy rains and strong winds; it was a struggle to even reach home safely.

The above sentence contains two clauses which are separated by a semicolon. Each of these can be stand-alone sentences. Thus, these two are independent clauses. We can say that the above sentence is a compound sentence.

(b) **Complex sentences** contain dependent clauses, i.e. at least one clause of the sentence cannot stand alone as a sentence because it would not represent a complete idea. For example:

- As soon as I entered the stadium in our derby match, I was blown away by the atmosphere and the sheer enthusiasm of fans cheering for their team.

Now, the above sentence is complex, because it contains a dependent clause: 'As soon as I entered the stadium in our derby match', this clause cannot stand alone as a sentence, because it's not representing a complete idea. It is dependent on the subsequent clause to complete the information or idea.

Now, let's look at the kind of errors made in this section:

Run-on sentences

If two independent clauses are joined by a comma, then it leads to a grammatical error known as a run-on sentence. In such cases, either a colon or semicolon is used. For example:

- I went to bed early that night, I was very tired as it had been a long day. (Wrong)
- I went to bed early that night: I was very tired as it had been a long day. (Right)

We can see that both the clauses in the above sentences are independent, so here we have a compound sentence. A colon or semicolon should not be used interchangeably, as they refer or indicate different things:

(a) A colon implies that an explanation will follow, i.e. the clause before the colon will be explained or reasoned by the clause that follows it. For example:

- His performance went smoothly and everyone in the crowd loved his act. (Wrong)
- His performance went smoothly: everyone in the crowd loved his act. (Right)

The first statement is a bit unclear, because we cannot be sure of why that performance went well. Was it due to the fact that the crowd loved it or for any other reason?

This ambiguity is removed by the use of colon which indicates that the first clause has been explained or reasoned by the one following it.

(b) A semicolon is used to join two independent clauses which are closely related.

For example:

- I have been to a lot of countries, Greece is my favourite place. (Wrong)
- I have been to lots of countries; Greece is my favourite place. (Right)

The first one is a run-on sentence. As the sentence contains two related independent clauses, hence the right way to join them is via a semicolon.

Note: You should not use both the semicolon and conjunction to join clauses in a sentence. Pick either a conjunction or a semicolon to join independent clauses.

(9) Modifier problems

It is another common mistake to use adjectives as adverbs. It is important to remember that adjectives only modify the nouns; whereas, adverbs modify verbs and even adverbs, or adjectives. Let's explain this error through an example:

- As he is British and someone who always lived in Britain, I was surprised at how fluent he represented his ideas in Hindi. (Wrong)

This statement is wrong, because the verb talked about in the sentence is 'representing' the ideas, and how was that done? *Fluently*. Thus, an adverb should be used there instead of an adjective. Just saying that 'his Hindi was fluent' would have been right.

Note: Some words can work as both adverbs and adjectives, depending on how they are used. For example: *Ferraris are fast cars*. Here 'fast' is an adjective, describing how Ferraris (a noun) are like.

- Usain Bolt runs fast.

Here, 'fast' is an adverb describing how the verb, i.e. 'running' is done.

Comparative Adjectives and adverbs:

While using adjectives or adverbs for comparing nouns or actions, we should be careful of the form we use:

Let's talk about adjectives first. There are two ways through which adjectives are made comparative, and there's no rule as such to determine which form is used when. You just have to know the right word. For example: *Fast* can be made comparative by using the form: *faster*; whereas, *beautiful* is made comparative by using the form: *more beautiful*. We can see that words like 'more fast' or 'beautiful-er' just sound wrong.

Mostly, adverbs are made comparative by adding *more*. For example:

- Jess performed ‘more gracefully’ than Alex did.

But, there are some irregular adverbs too, like fast (it is made comparative in *faster*, not *more fast*)

Note: Some modifiers should only be used in their absolute form, as using them in their comparative form makes them illogical. For example:

- I adore both the players, but Steve is ‘more perfect’ than Michael. (Wrong)

Perfect is itself some sense of completeness, and there’s nothing like more complete.

TYPES OF GRAMMAR QUESTIONS

Spotting error (Discussed later)

Sentence Correction (Discussed later)

Choosing the correct sentence (Discussed later)

Identifying the part of sentence which is grammatically wrong

In such questions, a sentence will be presented to you in four parts, namely: A, B, C, & D. Together, these four form a meaningful sentence: but one of these has a grammatical error and your job is to identify it.

Example:

- (a) The Mumbai police have found
- (b) the body of a man
- (c) who they believe to be
- (d) the prime suspect in the murder case

(c); The option that is grammatically incorrect is option (c). It incorrectly uses ‘*who*’ in place of ‘*whom*’. The difference between ‘*who*’ and ‘*whom*’ is like the one between ‘I’ and ‘Me’. ‘*Who*’ acts as a subject, whereas ‘*whom*’ acts as the object in the sentence. Here the Subject (Police) performed an action (found) on the person they found out. So, ‘*whom*’ is the right pronoun here.

Identifying which of the given statements are incorrect/ inappropriate

- This is just a variation of the major question types, in which you have to pick the incorrect sentence instead of the correct one. In these questions, pay attention to the directions given alongside.

SKILLS REQUIRED

(1) Knowledge of Grammar Rules

This is the most important attribute: knowing all the important grammatical rules, and their proper usage. You cannot argue against this. If you don’t know the rules, or if you cannot spot something fishy, then you cannot solve these questions. We have discussed basic grammar in the beginning of this section, along with the common mistakes, so, it will be good for you to recap that before we head to the questions. Also, if you want, you can try the internet for detailed understanding of the topics that you feel, you need more practice for.

(2) Vocabulary

If you know a lot of words, and also know their appropriate usage, then not only understanding, but also tackling questions would be easier for you. It will make you understand the meaning and context of sentences better, thereby aiding you in solving the question.

(Of course, some questions are just based on checking your vocabulary, but a good vocabulary can also help you in tackling other questions in the verbal section.)

(3) Clarity of thought

You need to be clear in your thoughts. Any ambiguity or opacity could lead to picking the wrong answer. If you are confused about any options, remember that with grammar questions, there is always only one correct way. Because of this, making an educated guess may work in some other sections, but trying something like that with grammar could land you in a tough spot. Staying on top of your nerves and keeping a clear head is especially required in this section, because you will have to remember and bear in your mind all the rules of grammar, or all the meanings a word might have. So, you need to be clear and consistent in your conclusions and thoughts.

(4) Intellectual capacity

It refers to the ability to understand something. It is quintessential that you are able to properly comprehend what each of the given sentence, clause or phrase is trying to convey. This is one fundamental step in solving a question. If you do not understand the meaning, and are just trying to solve the question based on the grammatical correctness part, you might end up choosing the wrong answer. The sentence must always make proper sense.